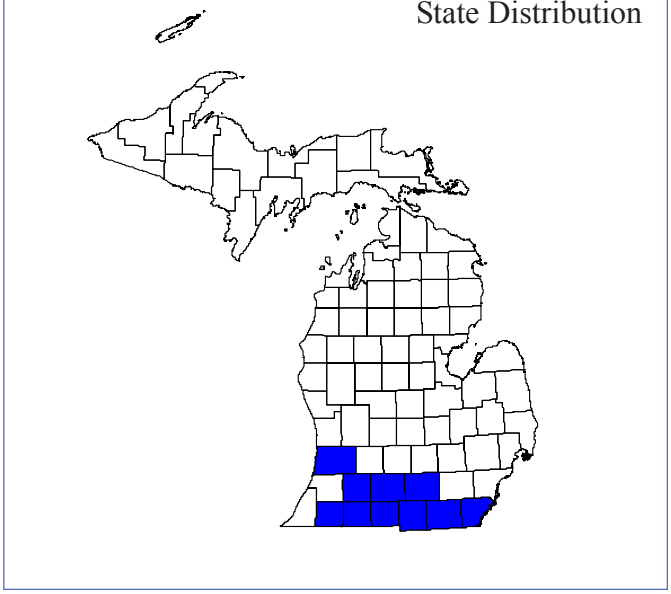
Erimyzon oblongus Mitchill — Creek Chubsucker

Image courtesy of Duane Raver, USFWS



Best Survey Period

Status: State Endangered

Global and State Rank: G5/S1S2

Family: Catostomidae (Suckers)

Synonyms: While three subspecies have been recognized, only the western creek chubsucker (*E. o. claviformis*) and the eastern creek chubsucker (*E. o. oblongus*) are widely accepted (Page and Burr 1991, NatureServe).

Total Range: The creek chubsucker occurs throughout much of the eastern United States. Two subspecies are widely accepted. The western creek chubsucker (*E. o. claviformis*) is found west of the Appalachians, north to the lower Great Lakes Basin. The eastern creek chubsucker (*E. o. oblongus*) is found along the Atlantic coastal plain (Page and Burr 1991). While the creek chubsucker is widely distributed, it is becoming increasingly rare at the edges of its distribution. It is considered vulnerable in Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Georgia, Ohio and West Virginia, and imperiled in Michigan and Texas. The creek chubsucker is presumed to be extirpated from Wisconsin (NatureServe).

State Distribution: Michigan is the most northern extent of the range of the creek chubsucker. It is found in several streams in the southern Lower Peninsula of Michigan. The creek chubsucker has historically been reported in the Kalamazoo, St. Joseph and Raisin Rivers and their tributaries. In the past twenty years, it has only been found in the Kalamazoo River in Allegan, Calhoun, and Jackson Counties.

Recognition: The creek chubsucker is olive above, with darkly edged scales giving a crosshatched appearance. The sides and belly of the fish are lighter with a more golden color. The creek chubsucker has a sucker-type mouth, positioned less ventrally than other sucker species. It is one of the smaller sucker species, usually measuring three to six inches in length (Page and Burr 1991, Evers 1994). The creek chubsucker may be confused with the lake chubsucker *(Erimyzon sucetta*) in Michigan. The creek chubsucker has 39 to 41 longitudinal rows of scales, whereas the lake chubsucker has 36 to 38. Young creek chubsuckers may also be confused with other minnow or shiner species (Trautman 1981).

Best Survey Time: The best time to survey for the creek chubsucker is in the summer to early fall months during periods of low rainfall that coincide with low water levels and low turbidity. In early spring, the creek chubsucker is found in smaller, upstream sections of

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creeks, during spawning, and may be easier to survey.

Habitat: The creek chubsucker prefers headwaters and clear creeks with moderate currents. They are most often found over sand-gravel substrates, and sometimes near aquatic vegetation (Trautman 1981, Page and Burr 1991). In Michigan, the creek chubsucker has typically been found in moderately swift streams, up to three to five feet deep, with sand-gravel-mud bottoms (Evers 1994).

Biology: Adult creek chubsuckers move upstream to spawn in the early spring. Males have been observed building nests, although eggs are usually scattered over substrates. Generally adults produce about 9000 eggs per year. Young creek chubsuckers form schools in vegetated quiet areas. Adults migrate into deeper, downstream areas for the summer, fall and winter. They may live up to five years (Trautman 1981, Becker 1983). The creek chubsucker diet is comprised of small invertebrates living on the substrate. The terminal mouth of this species may indicate that they feed less on the bottom than other sucker species.

Conservation/Management: The creek chubsucker is highly sensitive to siltation and pollution. In Ohio, dead creek chubsuckers have been found with silt packed gills (Trautman 1981). Agricultural runoff from recently cultivated fields was blamed for the increased siltation. Several of the populations found in Michigan recently were not living in ideal habitats. Information needs to be gathered on the current status of these populations, and instream and riparian improvements should be undertaken to provide optimum habitat for the creek chubsucker.

Research Needs: Additional surveys targeting specific habitat need to be conducted to determine the current distribution and health of historic populations in Michigan. Also, more information concerning preferred substrate and vegetation levels in Michigan is necessary to better protect and enhance habitat for the creek chubsucker.

Selected References:

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